[illegible]

# Discussion Questions for *My Sister's Keeper*

1. Reread the prologue to *My Sister's Keeper*. Who is the speaker? Is it the same person you thought it was the first time you read it?
2. What is the metaphorical relevance of Brian's profession as a fire chief?
3. Why is Jesse's behavior so aberrant, while until now, Anna has been so compliant?
4. What might be a possible reason for Brian's fascination with astronomy?
5. Kate is being admitted to the hospital in very serious condition. She mouths to Jesse, "tell Anna," but is unable to finish. What do you think she was trying to say?
6. Julia says, "Even if the law says that no one is responsible for anyone else, helping someone who needs it is the right thing to do." Who understood better how to "help" Kate, Sara or Anna?
7. Did Anna do the right thing, honoring Kate's wishes?
8. Do you feel it was unfair of Kate to ask Anna to refuse to donate a kidney, even though this seemed to be the only way for her to avoid the lifesaving transplant?
9. Brian says that when rescuing someone from a fire, that "the safety of the rescuer is of a higher priority than the safety of the victim. Always." How does this apply to his role in his own family?
10. Brian says, "Like anything that's been confined, fire has a natural instinct to escape." How does this truth apply to Kate? to Brian himself?
11. Brian is talking to Julia about astronomy and says, "Dark matter has a gravitational effect on other objects. You can't see it, you can't feel it, but you can watch something being pulled in its direction." How is this symbolic of Kate's illness?
12. For what reason(s) did Brian offer Anna a place to stay at the firehouse while the legal proceedings were underway?
13. How does Anna's decision to pursue medical emancipation parallel Campbell's decision to end his relationship with Julia after his accident?
14. Do you agree with Brian's decision not to turn Jesse in to the authorities for setting the fires?
15. Do you feel that it's ethical to conceive a child that meets specific genetic requirements?
16. If not, do you believe that there should be specific exceptions, such as the purpose of saving another person's life, or is this just a "slippery slope?"

## What the Critics Say . . .

"Picoult writes with a fine touch, a sharp eye for detail, and a firm grasp of the delicacy and complexity of human relationships." –The Boston Globe

"The author vividly evokes the physical and psychic toll a desperately sick child imposes on a family, even a close and loving one like the Fitzgeralds... there can be no easy outcomes in a tale about individual autonomy clashing with a sibling's right to life, but Picoult thwarts out expectations in unexpected ways... a telling portrait of a profoundly stressed family." –Kirkus Reviews

Picoult has become a master-almost a clairvoyant-at targeting hot issues and writing highly readable page-turners about them...It is impossible not to be held spellbound by the way she forces us to think, hard, about right and wrong." –The Washington Post

"It is difficult to find a book combining a timely moral dilemma with well-drawn characters for whom one cares. Picoult has written such a book." –The Boston Herald

"MY SISTER'S KEEPER is a thrill to read." –Chicago Sun-Times

Expect to be kept up all night by Picoult's latest novel, but it's much more than a page-turner; it's a fascinating character study framed by a complex, gripping story... Told in alternating perspectives by the engaging, fascinating cast of characters, Picoult's novel grabs the reader from the first page and never lets go. This is a beautiful, heartbreaking, controversial, and honest book." –Starred Review, BOOKLIST

"Expect a powerfully poignant, page-turning read."  
–San Antonio Express-News

"Picoult explores a complex subject with bravado and clarity, and comes up with a heartwrenching, unexpected plot twist at the book's conclusion." –  
Publisher's Weekly

"This beautifully crafted novel will grab readers with its stunning topic...Now go discuss it with your book club." –PEOPLE magazine

"This new novel is by far her best achievement, and a leap forward in her literary oeuvre." –Bookreporter.com

"MY SISTER'S KEEPER has the emotional tenacity to fuel tears and talk as it becomes a book club must-read." –New York Daily News

# Author Biography:

# Jodi Picoult



Jodi Picoult, 38, is the bestselling author of twelve novels: *Songs of the Humpback Whale* (1992), *Harvesting the Heart* (1994), *Picture Perfect* (1995); *Mercy* (1996), *The Pact* (1998); *Keeping Faith* (1999), *Plain Truth* (2000), *Salem Falls* (2001),

*Perfect Match* (2002), *Second Glance* (2003), [\*My Sister's Keeper\*](#) (2004), and *Vanishing Acts* (2005). In 2003 she was awarded the New England Bookseller Award for Fiction.

A new novel, *The Tenth Circle*, will be released in early spring 2006, shortly before her visit to the West Michigan area.

Picoult was born and raised –happily–on Long Island... something that she believed at first was a detriment to a girl who wanted to be a writer. “I had such an uneventful childhood that when I was taking writing classes at college, I called home and asked my mother if maybe there might have been a little incest or domestic abuse on the side that she'd forgotten about,” Picoult recalls. “It took me a while to realize that I already did have something to write about - that solid

core of family, and the knotty tangle of relationships, which I keep coming back to in my books.”

Picoult studied creative writing with Mary Morris at Princeton, and had two short stories published in *Seventeen* magazine while still a student. “The first time the editor called me to say she wanted to pay me for something I'd written,” Picoult says, “I immediately called my mom and said, 'I'm going to be a writer!' 'That's great,' she said. 'Who's going to support you?'" Realism - and a profound desire to be able to pay the rent - led Picoult to a series of different jobs following her graduation: as a technical writer for a Wall Street brokerage firm, as a copywriter at an ad agency, as an editor at a textbook publisher, and as an 8th grade English teacher - before entering Harvard to pursue a master's in education. She married Tim Van Leer, whom she had known at Princeton, and it was while she was pregnant with her first child that she wrote her first novel, *Songs of the Humpback Whale*.

Picoult says, “I found out it was going to be published just before my son was born, and I had this completely idealistic vision of him sitting at my feet, cooing, while I continued to write books. Needless to say, it didn't quite work out that way.” Her struggle to balance motherhood and her own career formed, in part, the basis for her second novel, *Harvesting the Heart*. For a few years, she was either delivering a book or a baby. Now, she's happy to be prolific solely in her writing... and admits wholeheartedly that she moonlights as a writer, but she's really a mom. “It took me a while to find the balance,” Picoult says, “but I'm a better mother because I have my writing... and I'm a better writer because of the experiences I've had as a parent that continually remind me how far we are willing to go for the people we love the most.”

She and Tim and their three children live in Hanover, New Hampshire with a dog, a rabbit, two Jersey calves, and the occasional Holstein.

# Meet the Author, Jodi Picoult

Monday, March 20 • 7:00pm

West Ottawa Performing Arts  
Center  
1024 - 136th Ave Holland  
(West Ottawa Harbor Lights School)



## Driving Directions:

From Fennville and Saugatuck Area:

- Take US-31 N toward LAKE MICHIGAN/HOLLAND/MUSKEGON.
- Make a U-TURN onto US-31 S.
- Turn Right onto Riley St. (1.1 Miles)
- Turn Right onto 136th Ave.
- Left into parking lot

From Spring Lake and Grand Haven Areas:

- Take US-31 S toward HOLLAND.
- Turn Right onto Riley St (1.1 Miles)
- Turn Right onto 136th Ave.
- Left into parking lot

The Performing Arts Center is at the north end of the Harbor Lights School. No tickets are required for this event. Doors will open at 6:15 pm and some of Ms. Picoult's books will be available for purchase.

# One Book, Lakeshore Programs

## READ IT LEAD IT!

### HERRICK DISTRICT LIBRARY AUDITORIUM

JANUARY 12, 2006, 2:00pm &

JANUARY 12, 2006, 7:00pm

Join Bill Hill from Grand Rapids Library and staff of Herrick District Library as they share tips on leading book discussions using *My Sister's Keeper*.

## COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

### SPRING LAKE DISTRICT LIBRARY

FEBRUARY 21 AT 7:00pm

Mary Tyler, the chair of Muskegon Community College's English Dept. and the Chairperson of the Muskegon Writers' Center will lead a discussion about *My Sister's Keeper* and share her insights about the book.

## STEM CELLS? MARROW? KIDNEYS? ETHICS?

### LOUTIT DISTRICT LIBRARY

FEBRUARY 8 AT 7:00pm

Join professors and medical professionals as they discuss the bioethical issues presented in *My Sister's Keeper* and the implications for our lives.

## HOW DO THEY DO IT?

### HERRICK DISTRICT LIBRARY

MARCH 2, 2006 AT 7:00pm

Dr. Virginia McDonough, PhD, Associate Professor of

Biology at Hope College will discuss "designer babies" and the future of disease treatment and gene therapy.

## Library Book Discussions

### Loutit District Library

January 26, 2006

7:00pm

### Herrick District Library Auditorium

February 7, 2006

7:00pm

### Teen Book Discussion—Herrick District Library Activity Room

February 14, 2006 7:00pm

### Saugatuck-Douglas District Library

February 14, 2006 4:00pm

### Herrick District Library Auditorium

February 16, 2006 1:00pm

### Fennville District Library Auditorium

February 23, 2006 6:30pm

### Herrick District Library Auditorium

March 6, 2006

7:00pm

### Howard Miller Library Auditorium

March 9, 2006

6:30pm

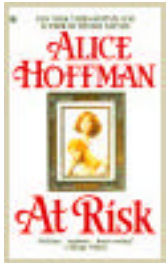
### Herrick District Library Auditorium

March 16, 2006

7:00pm

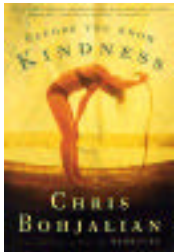


# Read-alike List for *My Sister's Keeper*

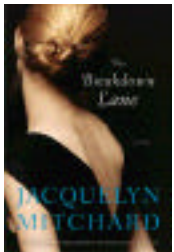


***At Risk*** by Alice Hoffman

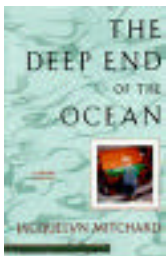
Amanda, an eleven year old girl, lives in a small New England town with her family. When she finds out she has contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion years before, she and her family must deal with both a terminal disease and rejection from their close-knit community.



***Before You Know Kindness*** by Chris Bohjalian  
Every summer the Seton family gathers at their country home in New England to spend time together as a family. This summer a tragedy occurs when twelve year old Charlotte accidentally shoots her father with a hunting rifle. The accident threatens to tear their family apart.



***The Breakdown Lane*** by Jacquelyn Mitchard  
Julianne's husband, Leo, walks out on his wife and three children after 20 years of marriage. Shortly after he leaves, Julianne is diagnosed with a serious illness.



***Deep End of the Ocean*** by Jacquelyn Mitchard  
A three year old boy is kidnapped from a hotel, where his mother has taken him and his two siblings to attend a 15 year high school reunion. His disappearance tears the family apart, affecting each family member in a different way.



***Dive from Clausen's Pier*** by Ann Packer

Carrie Bell's fiancée dives into shallow water at a Memorial Day Picnic and becomes paralyzed. The book takes the reader into Carrie's mind as she tries to deal with this life-changing event.



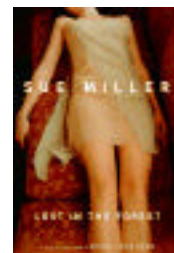
***The Gangster We Are All Looking For*** by Thi Diem Thuy Le

A six year old girl from Vietnam arrives in San Diego, California with her father. Their mother soon joins them, and the family begins a difficult adjustment of a new life in the united States.



***Midwives*** by Christopher Bohjalian

In a small town in Vermont, on a stormy winter night, a home birth goes terribly wrong. The mother dies and the midwife is charged with manslaughter. This story is narrated by the midwife's daughter, who tells of the effect of her mother's trial on her family.



***Lost in the Forest*** by Sue Miller

Set in Napa Valley, California in the late 1980's, Eva's second husband is killed in an automobile accident. Eva and her three children all deal with their grief in different ways.



***The Lovely Bones*** by Alice Sebold  
 Suzie Salmon was 14 when she was raped and murdered by her neighbor. She watches over her grieving family from heaven after her murder, and struggles to come to terms with her death.



***Talk Before Sleep*** by Elizabeth Berg  
 Ann and Ruth meet in their late 30's and become close friends. When Ruth is diagnosed with cancer, Ann supports her through her illness.



***A Theory of Relativity*** by Jacquelyn Mitchard  
 An automobile accident kills the parents of one year old Keefer Nye. A bitter custody battle follows when family members of both parents want to adopt the little girl.



***The Third Child*** by Marge Piercy  
 Melissa is the neglected third child of an ambitious senator and his unloving wife. When Melissa goes away to college, she falls in love with a man who stands for everything her parents hate.



***A Thousand Acres*** by Jane Smiley  
 In this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, a successful Iowa farmer turns his farm over to his three daughters. The youngest daughter objects, and is excluded from his will. Dark truths emerge in this contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's King Lear.

## Participating Libraries

**Herrick District Library**  
 300 South River Avenue  
 Holland, Michigan 49423  
 (616) 355-3100

**Herrick North Side Branch**  
 155 Riley Street  
 Holland, Michigan 49424  
 (616) 738-4360

**Fennville District Library**  
 400 West Main Street  
 Fennville, Michigan 49408  
 (269) 561-5050

**Howard Miller Library**  
 14 South Church Street  
 Zeeland, Michigan 49464  
 (616) 772-0874

**Loutit District Library**  
 407 Columbus Street  
 Grand Haven, Michigan 49417  
 (616) 842-5660

**Saugatuck-Douglas District Library**  
 10 Mixer Street at Center Street  
 Douglas, Michigan 49406  
 (269) 857-8241

**Spring Lake District Library**  
 123 E. Exchange  
 Spring Lake, Michigan 49456  
 (616) 846-5770